SIRHAN SPEAKS FOR FIRST TIME

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Comments When Death Penalty Is Discussed

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Sirhan Bishara Sirhan spoke up for the first time at his murder trial Wednesday when the subject of a possible death penalty came up.

It happened as prosecutor David N. Fitts was questioning a prospective juror in the trial of the 24-year-old Jordanian charged with murdering Sen. Robert F. Kennedy last June.

Fitts, addressing Lawrence K. Morgan, asked: "Would you have the courage, once deliberating, if first-degree murder was a proper verdict in this case, to come down here and say Mr. Sirhan must die in the gas chamber?"

Sirhan leaned forward at the counsel table. A smile crossed his face.

"There, you're getting a good view of him now, and he's smiling at you," Fitts said. "He probably will be smiling at you for the rest of the trial."

Sirhan then spoke up, saying, "I smile at you, too, Mr. Fitts."

Superior Judge Herbert V. Walker told Fitts to stick to questions and not comment on Sirhan's behavior.

Then Morgan, a computer programmer, was tentatively seated, as was Leslie H. Laney, a post office supervisor. They were the first two men seated as prospective jurors. Four women were chosen earlier.

Later another male prospective juror was tentatively seated.

Questioning by the defense was handled for the first time by Russell H. Parsons, one of Sirhan's three lawyers.